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INFO RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA PRIORITY 1297
RUEHJL/AMEMBASSY BANJUL PRIORITY 5160
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0115
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0005

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAKAR 002091

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STATE FOR PRM/A, DRL/AE AND AF/W
ACCRA FOR REFCOORD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/30/2011

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [GA](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: REFUGEE REFERRAL FOR GAMBIAN REFUGEE SIDI M. SANNEH

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reason 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST

1. (C) Embassy Dakar requests authorization for a refugee referral to the U.S. Resettlement Program on behalf of Gambian refugee Sidi M. Sanneh and his wife and daughter, who took refuge in Dakar in 2006. Sanneh has presented evidence of persecution based on his position as former Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to Senegal. Despite Sanneh's persistent denials, Gambian President Jammeh fears Sanneh may be allied with the opposition and may be too closely linked with the GOS, particularly with regards to the issue of the Casamance conflict. Sanneh was dismissed from his position as Ambassador in February 2006. A member of The Gambia's National Intelligence Agency (NIA) then attempted to take Sanneh back to Banjul, but Sanneh refused. In July 2006, he began to receive threatening phone calls and noticed attempts to surveil his residence. He and his family are increasingly afraid for their well-being. Post considers their lives to be in immediate danger. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

POST'S REFERRAL

2. (C) Post's refugee referral is for Sidi M. Sanneh (DPOB: 2 DEC 1947, Banjul, The Gambia) and his family currently in refuge in Dakar. His family members' names and DPOB are:

Spouse: Neneh Jaiteh Sanneh (DPOB: 28 Dec 56, Banjul, The Gambia)
Daughter: Matarr Sillah Sanneh (DPOB: 4 Mar 81, Banjul, The Gambia)
Daughter: Sainabou Sanneh (DPOB: 13 Jan 91, Banjul, The Gambia)

Sanneh also has one daughter currently studying at York University in Toronto, Ontario. Her name is Aji Mallen Sanneh, and her DPOB is 28 Jan 87, Banjul, The Gambia. His eldest daughter is a U.S. Foreign Service Officer with the Department of State.

3. (C) Sanneh, a former permanent resident of the U.S., earned his B.A. in Economics and Political Science from Wilberforce University in Ohio. He obtained his M.S. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Wisconsin and followed that with a Diploma in Urban Management from M.I.T. He has had a distinguished career, working with The Gambia's Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (from 1980 to 1992). In 1992, he began to work as Assistant to the Executive Director of the African Development Bank. By 1998, he was appointed Executive Director of the Bank, a position he held

until 2001. From 2002 to 2004, he served as Senior Resource Mobilization Advisor to the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa.

¶4. (C) In November 2004, President Jammeh appointed Sanneh as Secretary for Foreign Affairs. In March 2005, Jammeh removed him from this position without explanation. When cross-border relations between The Gambia and Senegal turned sour later that year, President Jammeh asked him to return to work, though this time as Ambassador to Senegal. At the end of January 2006, Sanneh presented his credentials to the GOS.

In early February, a prominent member of the Gambian parliament and a Jammeh appointee reported to Sanneh that President Jammeh believed Sanneh had been approached by the opposition. Jammeh had, in fact, questioned Sanneh about this on many previous occasions. Each time he was asked, Sanneh denied any affiliation or contact with the opposition.

Nevertheless, on February 16, Sanneh received a call notifying him he had been relieved of duty. Sanneh demanded formal written notification, and in March, an NIA agent brought him notification, telling Sanneh the agent was under orders to take Sanneh back to Banjul with him. Sanneh refused. The GOTG subsequently permitted Sanneh and his family to remain in the Ambassadorial residence until the end of his daughter's school year.

¶5. (C) In July, after his daughter completed classes, his family moved to a hotel-residence, where they began to receive threatening phone calls from unlisted numbers. He also noticed the presence of Gambian cars around the hotel and Gambians coming and going with local phone company technicians. For some time, Gambians occupied the first floor of the hotel, causing him and his family to lock themselves into their rooms out of intense fear.

¶6. (C) Sanneh's suspicions and alarms are driven partly by his exposure to the inner workings of the Jammeh government, where he witnessed the disappearance of people. He also believes he is a target because of Jammeh's concerns that Sanneh may be working with the opposition and/or too closely with the Senegalese. In his position as Ambassador, Sanneh had frequent communications with the GOS to discuss the conflict in Senegal's southern Casamance region. In fact, on February 15, 2006--the day before Sanneh was let go by Jammeh--Pierre Goudiaby Atepa, a close advisor to President Wade, asked Sanneh to work with the Collective des Cadres Casamancais (a high-profile group of Casamance intellectuals) and arrange a meeting for the Collective with Jammeh to discuss ways to achieve peace. Sanneh forwarded the request to Jammeh, and Wade followed up by calling Jammeh to ask him to receive Goudiaby and the Collective. Sanneh believed this may have spurred Jammeh to fire him.

¶7. (C) Post has corroborated Sanneh's story with Embassy Banjul, which noted that he has been well and favorably known to the current and previous U.S. Ambassadors for many years. In addition, other Gambian officials resident in Dakar have reported threats against them.

¶8. (C) ACTION REQUEST: PRM's urgent consideration of this request is greatly appreciated, since Sanneh and his family's lives are in immediate danger. END ACTION REQUEST.
JACOBS